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SIPDIS

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KATHMANDU FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HUB

E.O 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: 2003 SHRIMP/TURTLE CERTIFICATIONS UNDER
SECTION 609 of P.L 101-162 - SRI LANKA

REF: STATE 54094

1. Summary: This cable responds to reftel request regarding Sri Lanka's sea turtle conservation program, and is based on information from the Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources (MOFOR). According to the MOFOR submission, Sri Lanka's fishing industry continues to use fishing methods that do not harm sea turtles. End Summary.

Wild harvested shrimp fishery

2. Sri Lanka's shrimp trawling grounds are located in the North, Northeast and Northwest. The Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) has not issued any licenses for mechanized trawling in these areas. MOFOR states that in the event mechanized shrimp trawling is allowed, Government will impose regulations requiring use of turtle excluder devices (TEDS) in mechanized trawlers.

3. There are three types of shrimp fisheries in Sri Lanka. One uses small trawls that do not have otter doors. The boats used in this fishery are non-mechanized and propelled by sails. They trawl within about one mile from shore, where the depth of the sea is less than 12 meters. Four fishermen go in each boat, and the trawl is towed manually. Presently, over 150 boats are engaged in this type of fishery, which is practiced mostly in Negombo, in the western part of the country.

4. The second fishery uses trawls using 3.5 ton, 9-meter boats powered by 30-horsepower (HP) inboard engines. The trawl is towed manually, usually by four to five fishermen. The time taken to haul the trawl is less than one hour. Presently there are about 60 such boats. This fishery is practiced in Wattala and Kalpitiya, in the western coastal belt.

5. The third fishery type uses cast netting (throw netting) in lagoons. In this type of fishery, usually two fishermen go in small boats powered with an out-board motor and throw a cone-shaped net that has circular sinkers at the bottom and a cord connected to the apex. The net surrounds the fish and shrimp, and sinks to the bottom, and is retrieved by pulling the cord. Due to the weight of the sinkers, the mouth of the net keeps closed and therefore the fish and shrimp inside cannot escape. Mostly subsistence or part-time fishermen practice this fishery.

6. According to the MOFOR, none of the above fisheries are harmful to sea turtles. In 2002, the total shrimp catch was estimate at 5,500 tons. Over 70 percent of it came from aquaculture.

Sea turtle protection program

7. GSL continues to conserve sea turtles. Sea turtles are protected under provisions of the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance.

8. The above information describing Sri Lanka's wild harvested shrimp fishery methods was received at embassy Colombo from MOFAR, and dated March 12, 2003.

WILLS